THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The demands of the trade unions relate to provision of pension as a third benefit, linkage of pension to consumer price index and grant of individual option to the employees to join the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995. Government has held discussions with the representatives of all the central trade union organisation before and after introduction of the Employees' Pension Scheme. While most of the other demands have been accepted by Government for implementation, it has not been found possible to accept these demands as the same have not been found actuarially feasible. The last meeting with the representatives of the Central Trade Union Organisations including CITU, UTUC etc., Members of the Central Board of Trustees, EPF, etc. was held in New Delhi on 19.12.1995.

Subsidy for Rice and Wheat Export

1036. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether the food subsidy meant for domestic sales is also being passed on to the rice, wheat, etc. meant for export;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof and the amount of subsidy which has thus been wasted; and

(c) the action Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) Though there is an element of subsidy involved in the export of wheat and rice because the price for sale of these cereals despite being higher than the Central Issue Price for PDS is lower than their economic cost to the FCI, the subsidy is not given at the cost of domestic sales/supplies for the PDS. In fact exports of foodgrains have been/are being allowed to reduce the subsidy burden on carrying costs of buffer stocks which are reimburseable to the FCI as a part of the food subsidy. Exports also enable the FCI to gainfully utilise its storing capacity during procurement operations.

Purchase of Sugar

1037. SHRI GUNDAPPA KORWAR: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether the traders have pointed out that they could have brought sugar at a rate cheaper than 5450.60 per tonne.

(b) whether the Central Government have conducted any enquiry as to how sugar was purchased by the MMTC at this high price; and

(c) whether Government have directed the MMTC and FCI not to purchase more sugar during 1995-96?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) No, Sir. Sugar imported in 1995, was purchased in a price range of US $ 415.00 to US $ 438.50 per tonnes C&F.

(b) At present, no enquiry is contemplated regarding imported sugar prices.

(c) After firm trends establishing sugar production at about 146 lakh tonnes were available in March 1995 Government directed STC/MMTC not to purchase sugar more than the already contracted quantity of 4.04 lakh tonnes. Subsequently, efforts were made to dispose off sugar at reasonable prices and about 1.99 lakh tonnes was imported.

Employees' Pension Scheme

1038. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications received and scrutinised by Government under the Employees' Pension Scheme;

(b) the number of persons who have been distributed pensions;

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to modify it in consultation

with trade unions in view of the opposition to the scheme;

(d) whether it is a fact that unions and workers are approaching courts for redressal of their grievances; and

(e) whether Government would make the scheme optional in view of the mounting opposition thereto?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) and (b) According to available information pension under the new Scheme has been distributed among 40,488 beneficiaries. The applications for pension are received and scrutinished by the Regional Provident Fund Authorities. As such the information about number of such applications is not available.

(c) Keeping in view the demands of the Trade Unions a notification has already been issued carrying out such amendments in the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, as have been found actuarially feasible.

(d) Some local Unions working in few establishments have filed petitions in Courts against the provisions of the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995.

(e) No, Sir.

13

Neglect of Rural Workers

1039. SHRI SARADA MOHANTY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the large mass of rural workers are being neglected as no attention is being paid by Government to safeguard their interests;

(b) if so, the steps taken to safeguard the interests of the rural workers; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The problems of rural workers are sought to be tackled through a multi-dimensional course of action viz., improvement of infrastructural facilities, diversification to non-farm activities, skill improvement programmes, financial assistance to promote self employment, optimising the use of land resource and social assistance etc., through a variety of rural development programme like the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Jawahar Rojgar Yojna (JRY), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Employment Assuracne Scheme (EAS) and National Social Assistance Scheme (NSAS) etc., During the VIIIth Plan, outlay for rural development has been raised from Rs. 10,650 crore to Rs. 30,000 crore. Outlay for animal husbandry, dairy & fisheries has also been substantially raised. Horticulture, piggery, poultry and sheep rearing have been made permissible Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) activities.

Sugarcane Arrears

1040. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:
SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the State-wise amount of sugarcane arrears due to farmers at the end of sugar season 1995;

(b) the amount due to farmers in each State as on 31st January, 1996; and

(c) the steps being taken to clear the above arrears and the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) On the basis of the available information furnished by the sugar factories, the State-wise amount of sugarcane arrears due to farmers at the end of the sugar season 1994-95 (as on 15.11.1995) and for the season 1995-96 (as on 31.01.1996) is at Statement (*See* below).

(c) The responsibility of ensuring timely payments of cane price dues by sugar mills lies with the State Governments